

CHINA'S POLITBURO STANDING COMMITTEE THE LEADERS

AFP, Beijing

The Chinese Communist Party yesterday unveiled its new seven-member Politburo Standing Committee headed by leader Xi Jinping. Here are the men who will rule Beijing for the next five years under Xi's leadership, in order of seniority.

Li Qiang: The former Shanghai party chief and Xi confidant was promoted to number two in the party hierarchy, making him likely to be named premier at next March's legislative sessions. Li is viewed as one of Xi's favourites, having served as the leader's chief of staff while he was party boss of the Zhejiang province between 2004 and 2007.

Zhao Leji: The 65-year-old former head of the party's top anti-graft watchdog has remained on the Standing Committee, being promoted to number three in the party hierarchy. The experienced administrator has been party secretary of two provinces and a Politburo member since 2012.

Wang Huning: Xi's ideology tsar and existing Standing Committee member has been promoted to number four in the party lineup. Dubbed the "brains behind the throne", the 67-year-old has devised ideologies for three current and former Chinese presidents, and is the architect of Xi's "China Dream" slogan, as well as the country's more assertive foreign policy.

Cai Qi: Current Beijing party chief Cai Qi has been promoted to the Standing Committee and becomes the head of the General Secretariat, managing the day-to-day affairs of the party. The 66-year-old is seen as a close political ally of Xi. He worked under Xi in the provinces of Zhejiang and Fujian.

Ding Xuexiang: The low-key Politburo member and top aide of Xi has been promoted to the Standing Committee. His appointment is seen as a reward for his loyalty to Xi.

Li Xi: The current Politburo member and party chief of economic powerhouse Guangdong province has been promoted to the Standing Committee, in an appointment widely anticipated by observers. Li, 66, was confirmed as head of the powerful Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, the party's powerful anti-graft watchdog, in a list released by Xinhua.

AFP, Beijing

When Xi Jinping took power in 2012, some observers predicted he would be the most liberal Communist Party leader in China's history, based on his low-key profile, family backstory and perhaps a degree of misguided hope.

Ten years later, those forecasts lie in tatters, proving only how little was understood of the man who is now China's most powerful ruler since Mao Zedong.

The colourful details of his early life have been rinsed and repackaged in official party lore, but the man himself -- and what drives him -- remain somewhat more of an enigma.

"I dispute the conventional view that Xi Jinping struggles for power for power's sake," Alfred L. Chan, author of a book on Xi's life, told AFP. "I would suggest that he strives for power as an instrument... to fulfil his vision."

Another biographer, Adrian Geiges, told AFP that he did not think Xi was motivated by a desire for personal enrichment, despite international media investigations having revealed his family's amassed wealth.

"That's not his interest," Geiges said. "He really has a vision about China, he wants to see China as the most powerful country in the world."

Xi is a man of faith... for him, God is the Communist Party. The greatest mistake the rest of the world makes about Xi is to not take this faith seriously."

Central to that vision -- what Xi calls the "Chinese Dream" or "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" -- is the role of the Communist Party (CCP).

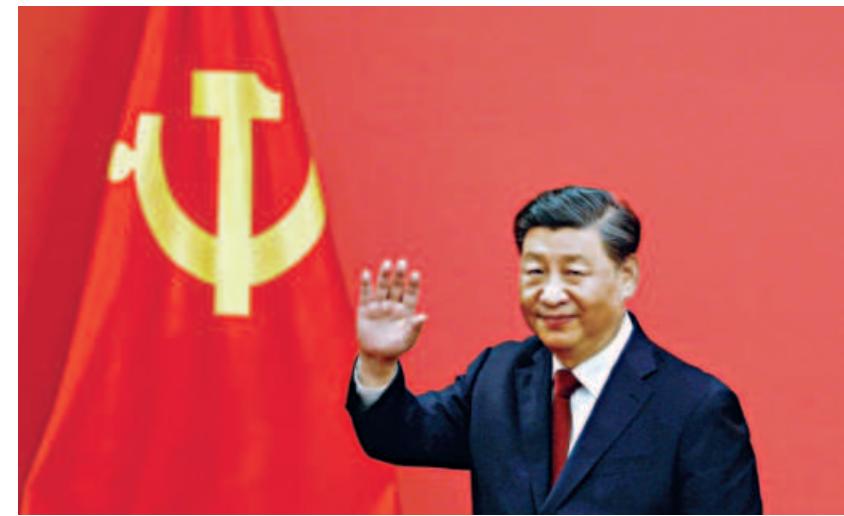
"Xi is a man of faith... for him, God is the Communist Party," wrote Kerry Brown, author of "Xi: A Study in Power".

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Xi might not seem an obvious candidate to become a CCP diehard, though he grew up as a "princeling", or member of the party elite.

His father Xi Zhongxun was a revolutionary hero turned vice premier, whose "strictness toward his family members was so serious that even those

XI JINPING Born elite, steeled by turmoil



close to him believed it bordered on the inhuman", according to the elder Xi's biographer Joseph Torqian.

But when Xi Zhongxun was purged by Mao and targeted during the Cultural Revolution, "Xi Jinping) and his family were traumatised", said Chan.

His status vanished overnight, and the family was split up. One of his half-sisters is reported to have killed herself because of the persecution.

At just 15, Xi was ordered to the countryside in central China where he spent years hauling grain and sleeping in cave homes.

"The intensity of the labour shocked me," he later said. He also had to take part in "struggle sessions" in which he had to denounce his father.

Biographer Chan said the experiences of his youth had given him "toughness" and the vents also made him realise the importance of law-based governance.

His rise to the power was not simple.

His application for CCP membership was rejected multiple times because of the family stigma, before it was finally accepted.

And he rose one step at a time.

Beginning as a village party boss in 1974, Xi climbed to the governorship of coastal Fujian province in 1999, then party chief of Zhejiang province in 2002 and eventually Shanghai in 2007.

Xi's father was rehabilitated in the late 1970s following the death of Mao, massively boosting his son's standing.

Even so, his potential was not

apparent to all, exemplified by comments made by his host on a trip to the United States in 1985.

"No one in their right mind would ever think that that guy who stayed in my house would become the president," Eleanor Dvorak said as lift-off took place at 12:07am from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Andhra Pradesh. This 14th launch of OneWeb satellites relied on India's heaviest rocket, normally reserved for government spacecraft.

India rocket puts 36 internet satellites into orbit

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

India's space agency says its rocket has successfully put 36 internet satellites into orbit for UK-based satellite company OneWeb after months of delay due to the war in Ukraine. The mission -- part of a commercial arrangement between New Space India Limited, a government run firm, and OneWeb -- was announced successful by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) early yesterday. "This is the first ever commercial launch of the new rocket LVM3 [Launch Vehicle Mark 3]," ISRO Chairman Sreedharan Panicker Somanath said as lift-off took place at 12:07am from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Andhra Pradesh. This 14th launch of OneWeb satellites relied on India's heaviest rocket, normally reserved for government spacecraft.

Russia strikes homes in south Ukraine Warns of escalation

REUTERS, Mykolaiv

Under pressure in the south of Ukraine, Russia fired missiles and drones into Ukrainian-held Mykolaiv yesterday, destroying an apartment block in the ship-building city near the front and warning the war was trending toward "uncontrolled escalation".

Mykolaiv lies roughly 35 km (22 miles) northwest of the front line to occupied Kherson, the southern region that is the target of a major offensive by Ukrainian forces to retake territory Russia captured soon after the February 24 invasion.

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, who Russian nationalists have blamed for Moscow's setbacks in the war, discussed the "rapidly deteriorating situation" in calls with his French and Turkish counterparts, the ministry said.

Shoigu said Ukraine could escalate with a "dirty bomb," conventional explosives laced with radioactive material, without providing evidence. Ukraine does not possess nuclear weapons, while Russia has said it could protect Russian territory with its nuclear arsenal.

In one conventional Russian attack yesterday, a missile strike wiped out the top floor of an apartment block in Mykolaiv, propelling shrapnel and debris across a plaza and into neighbouring buildings where windows buckled and walls cracked. Cars were crushed under the rubble, Reuters witnessed. No fatalities were reported.

Journalists not bound to divulge sources

FROM PAGE 1

In the 50-page full text of a verdict, released yesterday, the HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam, Talukder and Justice Kazi Md Ejazul Haque Akondo also said it's the corrupt who are destroying the nation that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had dreamed of.

The verdict came on a prayer of the Anti-Corruption Commission for taking action against a journalist of the Daily Inqilab over a report on corruption.

The ACC filed the prayer after the HC bench issued a suo motu rule on March 8 last year, enquiring about what actions were being taken in response to the report -- "20 Kotite Prokousholi Ashrafular Daayamuktii Durniti Domone

"Duduk Style" -- published by the daily on March 3 that year.

The report, by the Inqilab's senior journalist Sayeed Ahmed Khan, was about the corruption allegations against Ashraful Alam, former engineer of Public Works Department, and his wife Sabiha Alam, and how the ACC exempted them. It mentioned that around Tk 20 crore was per the Press Council Act, 1974, it added.

The HC further observed, "They [journalists] are the part and parcel of a democratic process. In a modern world, right to information is being treated as one of the preconditions for expression of opinion. Journalists act as helping hands in ensuring rule of law and democracy.

"They work as watchdogs

people are made aware of the corrupt practices prevalent in various state-run departments, organisations and agencies, and private organisations," the court observed in the full verdict.

The ACC can approach Bangladesh Press Council if it has any allegation about the report and the council will take necessary steps as per the Press Council Act, 1974, it added.

The HC further observed, "They [journalists] are the part and parcel of a democratic process. In a modern world, right to information is being treated as one of the preconditions for expression of opinion. Journalists act as helping hands in ensuring rule of law and democracy.

"They work as watchdogs

... They disperse information not to undermine any person, but to serve the cause of justice. In a democracy, there should be an efficient and fearless press to act as a watchdog for democracy."

The verdict also mentioned that yellow journalism will always be disapproved and discarded.

"Newspapers should concentrate on giving only the true picture of the society."

It added, "So, based on the aforementioned facts, circumstances and the propositions of law, we have no hesitation to hold the view that the laws have protected journalists from having to disclose their sources of information."

The bench observed that article 39 of the constitution guarantees freedom of thought and conscience.

"To be specific, article 39 (2)(b) has clearly mentioned the term 'freedom of the press'. Furthermore, it guarantees the right of every citizen to freedom of speech and expression subject to certain exceptions -- (i) in the interests of the security of the State, (ii) friendly relations with foreign states, (iii) public order, decency or morality, or (iv) in relation to contempt of court, (v) defamation or (vi) incitement to an offence."

Apart from the above, investigative journalism is the necessary corollary of such freedom and rights, the bench said.

About the HC judgement, ACC's lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star that there might be both positive and negative impacts of it.

"Those who do honest investigative journalism have got judicial recognition from this verdict, while on the other hand, those who make twisted reports based on rumours and do yellow journalism may take advantage of it."

Mohammad Shishir Manir, lawyer for journalist Sayeed Ahmed Khan, told this correspondent that thanks to this verdict, the concept of freedom of press will be upheld and the scope for investigative journalism will be widened for journalists according to their constitutional rights.

Pledge not to use power during the day

FROM PAGE 12

80 million cubic feet per day (mmcfd) of gas in the national pipeline from Bholi in the form of CNG within the next two or three months.

Tawfiq ruled out the proposed five percent gas diversion from domestic use as it could be unpopular. Currently, household use makes up 13 percent of the total gas demand in the country.

Also, another 10 to 20 percent gas could be saved if air conditioner use is reduced across the country. He requested all to save energy for the greater

interest of the country.

"If needed, electricity supply to other sectors will be halted during the daytime," he said.

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Prof Ijaz Hossain said the production in the industrial sector decreased by 40 to 60 percent due to the gas crisis.

"The crisis has been there since 2016, but stopping LNG import from the spot market has deepened it. The